

# Newspaper Widens Cracks in Apartheid's Wall

by Colman McCarthy

WASHINGTON--On leaving England in 1982 after a five-year stay, Taj Hargey had beaten the odds, set conservatively at a million-to-one. The oldest of eight children of illiterate South African "colored" people--an official government classification--he was returning to Cape Town with a Ph.D. from Oxford University.

Hargey's field was African history and politics, with dissertation on the suppression of slavery in the Nile Valley. His forefathers are descendants of slaves brought to South Africa by the Dutch in 1680 from Indonesia and Malaysia. Hargey's deceased father was a packer in a supermarket. It was the highest job ever reached in the family until the oldest child, Oxford-trained, became a teacher of history and religion in 1985 at the University of Cape Town.

Last week, Hargey announced to a group of high school and college students in Washington that still greater odds are awaiting to be beaten in South Africa: the establishment of a free press. Others have been working for that for decades, often being killed, jailed or beaten for the kind of reporting that Western newspeople take for granted.

Hargey comes forward as one of the organizers of "The Forum," a proposed non-

partisan weekly newspaper for South Africa. Its staff is to be multiracial, its politics independent and its tabloid pages open for discussion and debate of political opinion from left to right.

The paper's editorial policy is committed to what Hargey calls "interfaith tolerance and nonviolent struggle." In brief, it promises to fulfill Henry Miller's idea that a "good newspaper is a community talking to itself."

The push to publication -- a first press run of 50,000 copies is expected this summer -- comes a month after the South African government eased some of its press restrictions slightly. "There are cracks in the wall of apartheid," says Hargey who is 37 and fluent in six languages. "Our paper appears at a time when South Africa's domestic and international position makes it more difficult for the government to act against us. We couldn't be doing this a year or two ago."

Or months ago. On Nov. 10, 1989, the Committee To Protect Journalists, a New York based nonpartisan group that intercedes for jailed or silenced newspeople and defends the rights of ones who are threatened, wrote to President F.W. de Klerk to protest the harassing of the New Nation, a Catholic-owned weekly in Johannesburg. The paper had been closed for three months in

1987 and now faced another shutdown. Its offense was printing articles "promoting or fomenting revolution." The committee protested that "in many cases the offending material had been printed or broadcast in other media without legal repercussions."

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--Henry Miller

A month earlier, the group protested the arrest of more than 100 journalists, their crime being the reporting of police actions against anti-apartheid demonstrators. Last September, the editor of "Saamstaan" (Togetherness), a Southern Cape anti-apartheid community newspaper, was charged under the Prisons Act for printing a photograph of Nelson Mandela.

Hargey is in the United States until the end of April, sponsored by the Open House Society, a seven-year-old multiracial organization that promotes literacy, health education and employment in the majority black population. Asked by the society to be the Forum's executive editor, Hargey is currently a gleaner -- approaching U.S. computer firms for desktop publishing equipment, visiting editors and reports, estab-

lishing contacts in Congress, raising corporate and foundation money and asking for a hand from anyone who cares to donate technology -- from fax machines to phototypesetters -- to get the paper started.

To date, Hargey and others have \$80,000 worth of printing equipment in place, with another \$70,000 needed. Last year, the Open House Society bought a building in central Cape Town that will house the newspaper, a move that assures full in-house production capability should the prevailing white press monopoly wish to exert an economic squeezing. Hargey is also inviting newspeople to come to Cape Town for a spell, both to help in getting out the paper and to feel the excitement of risk-taking journalism.

"It's a mistake to think that the release of Mandela by itself will bring about peace and justice in South Africa," Hargey says. "Many of the restrictive laws are still in place. Journalists can be detained and the media can be prevented from having a full and free debate about politics."

Which is why a new voice is needed in South Africa. The phrase free press has become worn with usage in the United States. Its meaning is best understood by those struggling to create it. This year, that's in Cape Town.

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## Planet Awareness Week Benefit Concert

St. Peter's Hall, 27th & Leavenworth  
Saturday, April 14

Trip Akimbo  
Just Friends  
The Acorns

Plus an environmental expo featuring national, statewide, and local environmental groups

Special guests from  
Concerned Citizens of Nebraska  
fighting to keep the Breadbasket  
from becoming the Wastebasket!

Expo begins at 3  
Bands start playing at 6  
\$4

## 'Sacred Landscape' Author To Give Conference Friday

### A Philosophical Approach to Environmental and Social Issues

Fredric Lehrman is an internationally acclaimed author and lecturer and is the author of the book "The Sacred Landscape." In January, 1990, Mr. Lehrman was in Moscow, where he was part of the international delegation to the Soviet-American Citizens Summit on Restoring the Global Environment.

Mr. Lehrman will be in Omaha conducting a conference entitled "Navigating the 90's: Piloting the Ship Together," a philosophical approach to environmental and social issues.

The course will be held at the Kiewit Conference Center, 1313 Farnam on the Mall, Friday March 30 and Saturday, March 31. It is being co-sponsored by the Sierra Club and the Nebraska Solar Energy Society.

For more information call 493-3200.



Fredric Lehrman